

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 LAGOS 02262 221545Z

ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 L-03 H-01 PA-01 COME-00 AGRE-00
DOE-11 SOE-02 OES-07 USIE-00 SP-02 AID-05 EB-08
NSC-05 TRSE-00 SS-15 STR-07 OMB-01 CEA-01 CIAE-00
INR-10 NSAE-00 INRE-00 SSO-00 /090 W
-----117196 221548Z /53

O 221516Z FEB 78

FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 6702

C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 2262

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ECON, OTRA, OCON, NI

SUBJECT: BILATERAL ECONOMIC TALKS

1. MEA OFFICIALS INFORMED EMBASSY THIS MORNING THAT WORKING GROUPS' VISIT TO U.S. WOULD PROBABLY BE CANCELLED AND THAT PREPARATIONS FOR THE TRIP SHOULD BE SUSPENDED. DECISION FOR THIS ACTION REPORTEDLY MADE BY HEAD OF STATE SHORTLY AFTER HIS RETURN FEBRUARY 20 FROM LIBERIA. FORMAL NOTIFICATION TO EMBASSY EXPECTED FEBRUARY 23.

2. DECISION TO CANCEL TRIP COMES AS 'SHOCKING DISAPPOINTMENT' TO MEA, CABINET AND TO THOSE MINISTRIES AND AGENCIES WHO WERE TO PARTICIPATE IN PROJECT. ALL HAD SHOWN ENTHUSIASM, INTEREST AND CONVICTION THAT VISIT WOULD ALLOW MEANINGFUL PROGRESS TO BE HAMMERED OUT. THE FMG HAS NOT YET FURNISHED ANY OFFICIAL EXPLANATION FOR DECISION BUT MEA SPOKESMEN BELIEVE THAT ESSENTIAL REASON WAS AUSTERITY. LARGE MAJORITY OF INTERNATIONAL VISITS BY GOVERNMENT PERSONNEL OVER NEXT TWO MONTHS HAVE BEEN ABRUPTLY CANCELLED, POSTPONED OR REDUCED IN TERMS OF PARTICIPANTS. PRESSURE TO CURTAIL SPENDING WILL REMAIN ACUTE IN PERIOD THROUGH MARCH 31 WHEN ANNUAL BUDGET MESSAGE WILL BE DELIVERED. OVERSEAS TRIPS BY FMG OFFICIALS ARE HIGHLY VISIBLE AND LIABLE TO CRITICISM.

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PAGE 02 LAGOS 02262 221545Z

3. ACROSS FEBRUARY

18-20 WEEKEND, ECONOMIC SECTION HAD WORKED WITH MEA AND CABINET OFFICIALS IN EFFORT TO SWING TRIP BACK TO MARCH 6 SCHEDULE FAVORED BY DEPARTMENT. FMG OFFICIALS WERE SHOWING SIGNS OF AGREEMENT AND HAD PROMISED CLEAR DECISION BY NOT LATER THAN COB FEBRUARY 21. INSTEAD, WE RECEIVED REVERSAL

OF PLAN TO SURPRISE OF ALL CONCERNED.

4. AS DEPARTMENT AWARE, CURRENTLY PROPOSED AGENDA RELIES UPON
RESOURCES MOST READILY AVAILABLE IN U.S. LOCALE. AS PIECES
FALL INTO PLACE HERE, EMBASSY WILL ENDEAVOR DETERMINE WHETHER
TALKS COULD BE SWITCHED TO LAGOS AND STILL ACHIEVE USEFUL
RESULTS IN PERIOD REMAINING BEFORE CARTER VISIT. I AM SEEKING
URGENT MEETING WITH AFOLABI TONIGHT TO SORT THIS OUT.
EASUM

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NNN

Message Attributes

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